Wordeater 130

Wordeater exists as a forum of creative expression for the Joliet Junior College community, including students, alumni, faculty, and staff. It celebrates the diversity of ideas, beliefs, values, language, media, and people of its community. It seeks to promote artistic, personal, and political expression, democratic values, and social justice, including fairness and equal opportunity, rights, and access. Wordeater rejects censorship and attempts to reflect the artistry and lives of its community, while embracing JJC's Core Values of respect, integrity, collaboration, humor and well-being, innovation, and quality.

Wordeater #130 & Spring '14 E-Zine

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Front Cover

Me, Myself, and Eye
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self portrait
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yearbook

Stephen Clark Okawa

who are these false lights, trapped in the eyes
of a moment's last breaths? these smiling
brothers, page after page of potential, and no chances
at all? i see boys quoting dead presidents. i see
the scrawls of the uncreative – who've reached back,
only to wield a mushy memento, dredged-up whispers from halls once-
thought canyons.
and the voice –a prepubescent whine – almost makes me pine for the day
i sat and posed for the picture, grinning until a flash hit me,
leaving me in a stupor, until the dull brilliance of this bounded tome
calls me again, with only blood and bones left to play for
this time.

distortion

Faith Damm

My Other Half

Leonardo Mireles

Rorschach One

Faith Damm

Halluncinablism

Renée Stone

A

Dull ache

Knocking from below.

It's tolerated at first,

Resting with you in sand.

Lucid, you watch the sun's rebirth

Thirteen times—then it kicks your insides.

Your throat burns, dry and red, and suddenly

The wasted, vast beach is Jesus Christ's last supper

Ocean foams tart red wine, saliva runs to your mouth

Shells curve to cups of bread, acid burns your stomach raw

Sand molds to waves of creamed butter, your throat kneels to desire

Hungry eyes roam the infinite feast, like conceited men grazing on women.

You look down: a French loaf, steamed, carved to perfection, on your thighs.

Pick it up, bite down, chew, savor—hot metal, the blood of a friend.

Faerie Folly

Amber Rubio

There's definitely something wrong. The metal burns my skin and sends spikes of pain radiating from my fingers all the way up my spine. I drop the bracelet onto the carpet at my feet and the pain immediately disappears, leaving only a small reddish blotch on my wrist. Rubbing it wistfully, I kick the bracelet, which seems to wink at me evilly in the light, with the toe of my shoe. Sighing I lean over my bullet list on my desk and check off another item:

- Can make flowers or plants grow
- Large quantities of honey make you drunk
- Allergic to iron √
- Easily offended √
- Prefers the outdoors √
- Drawn to Hawthorn trees √
- Can travel through ley lines
- Can cause others to develop sinus infections/tuberculosis
- Can see other faeries or sidhe folk; faerie sight (?)
- Greatly enjoy milk, salt, and fire √

Five out of ten so far. I don't even know if I want to continue. But I kind of have to right? How else will I ever figure any of this out? There's too much weird crap going on to ignore. My eyes continuously go back to the second to last bullet on my list: faerie sight. I should just check that one. No. I don't want to. I can't be sure that I see what I think I see. It's more likely that I'm crazy. As for the rest those can be normal things that everybody likes or does. Get a grip Breigh, I tell myself shaking my head. Let's just move on to the next test. Um, honey. Gotta find some honey. Head to the kitchen and start digging through the cupboards. Aha, golden clover honey. Perfect. Snap the top open and squeeze a droplet of the thick gold onto my finger. Lick it off and swallow. Mmm, yummy. Wait a few seconds, savoring the taste. Alright, I don't feel drunk. Maybe I need more, I think, reaching over and grabbing a spoon from the drawer. Taking the cap off, I dip the spoon into the jar and come out with a large glob. I shove the whole thing into my mouth without hesitating, then dip the spoon back in for more. After four large spoonfuls my cheeks start to feel warm. I get sick of standing in front of the counter and decide to hop up and sit down. Instead I slip, unable to catch myself and end up on the floor, honey in hand. Well, that was interesting. A small giggle escapes me. I reach for a fifth spoonful of honey and pause. Crap. I think I'm tipsy. What the hell? I shake my head and things get a little fuzzy for a brief

moment. I am tipsy! Now try to stand without making an ass of yourself, and put down the honey. I return to the list in my room and check off the second bullet point.

Six out of ten. Blink slowly. Six… out of ten. This can't be real. It just can't. No, no, no. I can't be a faerie! Alright, alright, alright. It's just a test. No, it's a game. It's just a stupid game that I decided to play. Breathe, Breigh. Just breathe. I inhale and exhale slowly several times before I feel clear headed enough to continue. Next, what's next on the list? Can make flowers or plants grow. Ok, let's see. There's a potted geranium in the living room and a spider plant hanging from a ceiling fixture. Both belong to my stepmother who never waters them anyway. I'll try the geranium, it should be easier. First, I'll grab a tall glass of water from the kitchen sink and then head to the living room. There's too much of my stepmother in this room and it fills me with loathing. Before it was bright and colorful, with baskets ivy and bookshelves adorning the robin's egg blue walls. But then my dad remarried and my stepmother felt it necessary to redecorate in order to acclimate herself to her new home. The walls were repainted in an ugly puce that reminded me of cat vomit and a beige leather sofa with a tiny modern coffee table took up the rest of the space. In a corner of the large entertainment center turned bookshelf, because Marlene didn't believe in TVs, stood the neglected geranium in a black pot. I sit down on the sofa, the leather cold and uncomfortable, and put the plant in front of me.

What do I do now? Having no idea, I place my palms flat on the table and lean in close to stare at the wilted petals, willing them to come back to life. The thought, *this is so dumb*, floats through my head. I stare intently at the flower, eyes fixated on the dead orange color. Focus. Slow breaths in and out, in and out. Imagine light spilling out of you and into the plant, breathing into it new life. Like the pictures in the book of faerie myths you saw. Close your eyes, Breigh, and when you open them again you will heal this flower. The world seems to concentrate into one single point, one single thought and when I open my eyes I see the flower. I breathe out and a trail of white light spills from out of me and dusts the petals gently making them shimmer. They change and grow, expanding outward with color. Pink starbursts bloom in the center of creamy orange tips and bright green leaves curl themselves out as if from a long slumber. A small gasp escapes my lips and I feel light as air as something akin to exhilaration sweeps through me. It's healed; I brought a flower back to life. I must be a faerie!

Practically dancing on my way back to my room I check yet another item off the list. Seven out of ten. And if I'm being honest with myself, it's more like eight out of ten. There's no way I'm crazy—not when I have proof like this. I could literally show people my plant powers and they would have to believe me. So this means that what I saw was real. Truly there's no other explanation for all the shadows, glimpses, and figures

in the corners of my vision. The darting human-like shapes whizzing through the air, the people with faces that change from human to something feral and ethereal. A huff of awe slips out of my lungs and I fall back onto my bed with a whoosh. I wonder what Dad will say when I tell him. Will he finally tell me who my birth mother is? It has to be from her that I get my faerie genes. I would've noticed if my own father was a faerie. Plus he's not allergic to iron since he has to work with it at his construction job all the time. Yeah, I must have a faerie mother. There are two more tests on my list. *Why not*, I think, I might as well just get them done to have absolute proof of who I am. Let's see: can cause others to develop sinus infections or tuberculosis. Yikes. Well, I don't want to give anyone tuberculosis; besides, they have an easy cure for that don't they?

Chuckling to myself I skip outside to the backyard where my stepmother is laying out in the sun getting even more tanned than she already is. Her burnt orange skin is glistening with baby oil and her bottle blonde hair is piled on her head and she wears a skimpy pink bikini. Shuddering delicately at the sight of her, I stop short in her sight and take a deep breath. She looks at me, her lip curling into a sneer. "What do you want Breigh? You're blocking my light. I have to look my best for the homeowners' association meeting since I'm hostessing this month. Be a dear and get out of my way." I plaster a grin on my face and stand my ground, focusing on the irritating quality of her voice and how angry she makes me. Heat seems to be building up behind my eyes as I stare at her. I am growing more furious by the second and I begin to wish terrible things on her. Marlene squints her eyes at me, getting ready to say something, and then she sneezes. She sneezes again. And again. She suddenly goes into a flurry of non-stop sneezing, head back, body convulsing, can't catch your breath sneezing. In between her frenzy she haltingly yells at me, "Don't- just- stand- there! Bring- me- some- tissue! Damn- it!" Choking laughter erupts from me and I dash back inside. Holy crap, I just gave my stepmother a sinus infection. Ha! I run back to my room and check it off the list. Wow, nine out of ten.

Having no clue as to what a ley line is or where I could even find one, I decide to forgo that last test and just accept the fact that I am an awesome and powerful faerie. I dance and twirl around my room, laughing and spinning until I get so dizzy I fall to the floor in a heap of raw energy and excitement. There is one final test I could do. I didn't bother writing it down because at the time it seemed so farfetched I couldn't even consider it. But now, now that I've proven to myself beyond a doubt that I am as real as a corn faerie, there should be no question. I get up from my bedroom floor and walk up to my father's room on the second floor of our two story house. I open the door and go straight for the balcony that wraps around the back of the house. Outside my stepmother is still sneezing furiously. She tries to cover her face with wads of tissue and tears drip down her cheeks. She looks like she's in pain

as each sneeze racks through her body. Ignoring her plight I climb up the small ladder that scales the side and leads to the roof. Once at the top I open my arms to feel the breeze and the sun on my skin. Closing my eyes I tiptoe to the edge, arms spread wide. One last test. Probably the most important test. Every faerie has wings. Without opening my eyes, I step backward so I can get a running start. Then I rush forward, gravel sliding and scraping beneath my feet. My last test, the one that will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that I am a faerie. I leap.

cherry blossom

Lucy Dankova

#326

Kelsey Kreger

I shiver with this new biting air. I keep my eyes glued shut; I don't want to open them...I don't want to know where I am. Large fingers pull at me, grabbing my ribs, shaking me. Am I breathing? I don't think I am. Someone knocks me to the ground and air floods my lungs; my eyes flutter open, watery to this cold bright world. I lay on hard cold concrete, marked by dark red stains. My mother nudges me, and I start to feel warm again. I struggle to my feet, wobbly kneed and wild-eyed I try to walk. My mother laughs at me. "If you walk to me, I have a special surprise for you." I know what it is, and I need it. Who wouldn't want warm milk after such a traumatizing arrival as I just endured? I wobble my way to my mother and enjoy my prize. That's when I notice the large abscess hanging from her legs. Three more line her chest. "Mother, what are these? Why don't I have those?"

"They are wounds, my dear...wounds from this place. I won't make it through another pregnancy." She doesn't look at me.

I swallow hard; there have been more than me? "I'm not the only one? Where are my brothers and sisters? How many are there?"

"I don't know. I try to think they are somewhere nice. Lush in grass, sunlight and fresh air." She shifts from one leg to another, staring at the wall. "Enjoy your milk, my love, for this moment won't last long. Pregnancy, though painful, is the only joy I have been blessed with in this harsh world."

I lay next to her, her warm body rising and falling in sharp painful breaths. I close my eyes and dream of a warm place, just my mother and me.

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I gasp for air, someone shoved me in my stomach, knocking the air out of me. I try to open my eyes. My mother is crying and thrashing, her neck entangled with rope. Four men yank her forward. She looks back at me, tears in her eyes "I love you".

"Momma! Momma!" I scream until I taste blood.

She has been gone for hours now; all I can do is whisper her name. I don't want to ever get up again; I want to lay here and die. Two men walk in, I stare up at them, and my mouth opens but no sound comes out. One of the men kicks me. I can't get up, I can't. A shocking pain hits my back; they're hitting me with a long metal rod. Over and over they hit me. I struggle to get up. My legs shake and I'm shoved and kicked out into a long hallway. Others stretch to look at me through their barred prisons, their eyes wide, some with tears. They're crying for me, calling out to me. I'm yanked into the back of a truck and tied, my neck pressed against the cold metal. More of us line the truck. They look at me expecting me to say something. I bow my head and sob.
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My feet are caked with my own feces and most likely that of the others. My side aches, a scabbing bloody number burned into my side. My name is 326. It's feeding time, but I don't want to eat anymore. Yesterday I was forced to eat; a man shoved a metal funnel into my mouth, shoveling food into it. My stomach is hard with bloat and I can't imagine putting anything else in it. I shift weight from one foot to another trying to ease the pain.

"326?" whispers the one next to me, "just act like your eating it, I'll eat yours. I'm so hungry...please."

I look at him—I don't know if with disgust or with sympathy. I nod.

322's head plunges into my food bucket. The sickening sound of smacking mash makes my stomachs lurch. I want to lie down, but last night when I got up I was caked with feces, the smell adding to my nausea. Though my feet ache, I close my eyes. Sleeping is my only amity... nothing smells rotten there.

I awake to screaming ...everyone is screaming. 322 is on the floor lying in a heap, blood dripping down his legs. His wild eyes, stare at the ceiling, his chest moving to fast. I nudge his face. "322, what happened?"

"They grabbed me and cut me, between my legs. They're going to do it to you to. They just took 324." He cried.

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I awake to the pain. A pain I've never felt before. I scream until my throat is raw. My legs are covered with blood and flies. They bite my tender wounds. 324 lies next to me. 322 is up, his face in a bucket of food. I grit my teeth together. 324 isn't moving, his stomach is bloated, and his tongue is hanging out of his mouth. His eyes are open staring off into the distance, his face covered in flies.

"324...324?" he doesn't move.

I try to cry, but I can't. Nothing comes out. I don't want to open my mouth or flies will come in. They're everywhere, flies! In my face, in my eyes, biting my ears. I scream and pull myself out of the fecal disease and lay against the barred fence. When will it end? My misery. Our misery? I stare at 324...he's gone and I wish I were in his place. I scream.

"Shut up," says 322.

I stare at him and look at my bucket, his mouthful of white mush.

"Why do you keep eating?!" I shove into him. He falls into the stinking abyss of flies.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

324 is gone. They pulled him out this morning. They're leading us outside. I can smell something rotten burning. I want to run. We're prodded through the gates and out into the cold air. They send us individually through a gate. A man with a syringe injects something yellow into my shoulder. It doesn't hurt. The flies' bites are much worse. I swallow back the sickening horror of what might have been in that syringe. We're being led outside. An entanglement of fencing surrounds
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us like a barbwire spider web, mutilating anyone who attempts to cross it. I was expecting the warm sunlight and the smell of green grass. Instead it smells like rotting meat and urine. Hundreds of us are crammed together, no room to stand, let alone walk. Some lie in a heap on the ground, covered in mud. They don't look alive, but the muddy mounds rise and fall.

322 stands next to me. "Where is the food?"

I ignore him. It starts to snow.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

322 is larger than most of us. He struggles to breathe and walk. Why does he keep eating? Three men come to the fence to examine us; one is carrying a clipboard. He looks at 322's branding and writes something down. He looks at me and mumbles something to the men and walks away. The cold is unbearable. Some have died. I lay next to one...he's still warm. I try to breathe but my lungs feel full of fluid, a gurgling sound crackles with every exhale. I listen to the moans and groans, the occasional loud thump of someone falling to the ground. I can see my breath, a cool cloud showing me I'm still alive. I want to be dead.

I look up at 322; the men are dragging him away. I shake to my feet and follow him.

He looks back at me crying, "I don't want to leave you 326...please."

His face is matted with frozen dirt and wet hair. I follow, nudging him forward.

"It's ok, its almost over." I walk beside him. He nods. A man shoves me away from the gate; he doesn't want me to follow him. I trip on the lip of the concrete and fall to my knees, screaming. Pain shoots through my legs. They leave me there and lead 322 onto a truck. The man looks down at me and waves his hand in the air. A loud rumbling sound echoes behind me. I look back to see a rusty orange tractor with a large shovel coming towards me. I scream for help. I expect it to stop but it doesn't. I try to get up but I can't My legs won't move. They're twisted and shattered underneath me. The sharp cold force of the tractor shovel shoves me forward up and over the concrete. I scream, tears cold on my face, the shovel cutting into me. My heart races, the cold air like knives in my lungs. Blood comes out my nose and I can feel its sticky heat. They load me into the shovel and put me in the truck, 322 standing above me.

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Dead carcasses hang from the ceiling. My heart pounds hard against my chest. I can hear 322's screams; he's still alive as they hang him from the hooks. I taste irony blood and watch as the hooked screaming cows are revolved along a steel track. Hideous banging sounds echo off the walls, I breathe in the rotting smells and stale air. I close my eyes and try to imagine my heart not beating anymore. The beats lessen, each thud further and further apart. A quietness fills my ears, a heavenly silence. My mother, stunning and strong, calls to me. 324 is running in the field, 322 eating the fresh grass. I run to them, my face toward the warm sunlight. It is finished.

A Presence

Brianne Lynn Wilson

My heartbeat quickens.
My senses are sharp like a small switchblade.
Don't open your eyes.
Young blood pumping through my pale skin at a steady thump,
I am alert and aware.
I jut my left ear out into the air and squeeze my eyes shut.
I am supersonic in this moment, no sound will surpass me.
Did I hear something?
Nothing,
But I remain still.
In my vulnerable skin, I wait.
Hypothetical horror scenes bounce around in my innocent mind.
Worst case scenarios are played out on the big screen of my eyelids.
Panic waves over me.
The dreaded what if.
Lungs sucking harder for air; I try to quiet my breathing.
In creeps the familiar tingle down my spine.
Goose bumps slowly arise covering my body,
A lump forms in my throat.
If I am silent, I am invisible.
If I am silent, I am invisible,
I mentally chant.
I know there is nothing to fear, right?
You're such a baby, I tell myself.
The down-talking doesn't help.
I focus on my breathing.
Relaxed,
In... Out... In... Out... In... Out.
Details become large distortions,
Shadows dance around my closed vision.
Be quiet.
My mind races with erratic thoughts.
A drip of sweat trails down to the base of my neck,
I feel the rush flood over me.
I am paralyzed.
The hairs on my arms are raised, sensitive to the inside of my sleeves.
Keep control, keep control, there's nothing there.
There's nothing there.
Is there?

short poem

Stephen Clark Okawa

sit by a frosted window long enough,
you risk succumbing to the cold, vaporous claws stretching-out
to steal you; you risk being unveiled, in the mocking light and, eventually,
becoming the window all can see through –

transparent as the unassailable wall
between one dead relationship
and the next

Inner Space

Leonardo Mireles

Whiskey and the Man Who Walks Away

Donald Hunt

There are three things everyone needs to understand about writing. First, you should never write the story you want to write; you should write the story that needs to be written. That was my problem: I could never tell the difference between want and need. Learn to listen to what needs to be heard, and if you want a good story find a hole-in-the-wall bar and listen. Not to the loud mouth college boys that will tell a million lies, listen to the men drinking the strongest drink and speaking to no one but their ice. They have the best stories and every word will be the God-given truth. No one drinking to forget knows anything but truth. It's what has brought them to this point because somewhere along the line the truth became too much for them to hold onto. The alcohol gives them strength to make it through the dark lonely night. The third truth is harder to put into words but it doesn't make it any less important. I've been told the third truth is a little different with each writer. For my college professor, it was all about knowing when to stop. The third truth was taught to me one night in a bar. However, this isn't a story about me, or even about writing. It's a story about a man I met in a bar while travelling. He was the man the second rule was written for.

The bar was some joint in a small farm town in Illinois. The type of place named after some small town country bumpkin that doesn't mean shit to the rest of the world, but to the people of that town that name and that place meant more than life itself. The type of town that didn't have a restaurant, but they had a church that was standing room only on Sundays—it is the day of the Lord after all—and they had the Bar. I stopped in late on my way driving across the country. I was in need of something, a drink maybe, or maybe just someplace to stretch my legs and shake some of the road cramps out of my back and relieve my eyes for the endless fields of corn and hay. It was late on a Friday night and the music and light drew me in like a moth to a bug zapper on a summer night. The place was packed. I walked in and everyone kind of turned to see me. In a place like this it was always the same faces and the important people were already there. They quickly realized that it was a stranger they had never met and would not stay long in their friendly little home away from home.

I made my way over to the bar careful not to brush against anyone too hard or make eye contact. In a place like this you never know when an innocent smile and a nod to a pretty face could end up in a fight. Had I been in my early twenties, like most of the people here were, I would have walked in like King Shit of Turd Mountain, but I had left those years behind me long ago. I made my way to an empty seat next to a man in a worn flannel jacket and a faded blue baseball cap. I asked if the seat was taken. He shook his head no, never even looking to see who had asked;

hell, he never took his eyes off the drink he held in his hand. The skins on his hands were cracked and as worn as his jacket. His knuckles were knots tied to the tree branches that served as his fingers. I noticed there was no ring on his left hand, no tan line either, which meant either there had never been a ring or it had been taken off long ago. Under his hat I could see brown hair sticking out the sides and random strands of grey flecked throughout the unruly strands. In his left hand he held a glass filled with some dark whiskey. I couldn't read the type, since his right hand held the bottle obscuring the label.

I sat down and waited for the young bartender to stop flirting with what was, I'm sure, a very nice young lady. She was dressed like the town whore, however, but looks can be deceiving in places like this. From behind me I heard someone yell in a slurred voice, "Hey Fucker you took my seat." Although to be fair it came out more like "He fucka yous tuk mys eat." I began to turn around to apologize to whoever I had slighted, however something told me that, mistake or not, I was in for a long night dealing with some drunk asshole no matter what I did from here on out. Before I could turn, the stranger next to me grabbed my arm in a vice-like grip. "You're fine," he said. "Enjoy your drink when Nick brings it." He turned around to the voice. The bar around us grew silent. I wasn't sure who my new friend was but everyone else sure seemed to know. "Brett you're drunk and an asshole. That makes you a drunken asshole. Go home before you piss yourself... again." He turned back around and the hand that had grabbed me was back on his drink. To this day I don't know if he had ever removed his right hand from the bottle or not.

From behind us I heard Brett say "Fuck you, Your Honor." Laughing a drunken laugh that slurred just like his speech, "You know who I am? You know who my father is?" or, as the ear heard it, "Mi fath eris?"

The stranger next to me didn't turn around; instead, his eyes looked straight ahead. Most of the night they did that, just looking into what I though was nothing. "Yes I know who you are. I know who your father is. Just like you know who I am and who my father is. What you don't know is my father thought the same thing about your father that I think about you. You're both assholes. Now shut the fuck up." He took a long drink straight from the bottle like he was swigging a cheap beer.

Brett said something under his breath, the way a coward does when they think of something to say, but know whatever they say will only end up with their bell getting rung. From where I sat it sounded like something about my new friend's mother.

The bartender finally approached and I ordered my drink and thought of ordering the flannel next to me a drink, but I realized he already had his. "Thank you for your help. I'm Alex," I said offering my hand.

His eyes were still looking off at a world almost unblinking. "I didn't do it for you. I just can't fucking stand that guy." He smiled and made eye contact with me. His eyes were ice blue and very sad, like his life, which had been a long hard road he had walked alone in for far too long. Looking at him straight in the face he wasn't as old as I had first assumed. From the way he sat, the way he drank, and the gray around

his temples, I would have guessed he was in his mid to late fifties. Now looking directly at him I would say I was off by at least fifteen years. He never did shake my hand. He turned away and took a long sip from the bottle. "You're new here. You'll soon realize that this town is its own universe and this bar is its sun. These people are planets, and that asshole is like Hailey's Comet. He comes around every so often, gets a lot of attention, and leaves with a trail behind him; with him though, that trail is piss." I understood what he meant. Small towns like this tend to be their own little worlds, few things change, and even fewer strangers come to visit. "What brings you here?"

"I'm just driving through. I needed to stretch my legs. Saw this place, thought I might hear a good story or two." He glanced at me sideways, "I'm a writer."

"Working on the next great American novel?" He wasn't wrong. I was looking to write something. I had been on a long wordless draught and needed to see some of America to hopefully get the words flowing again.

"Something like that, yeah," I said with a smile. "What about you? What part do you play in this universe?"

He took a drink from his glass, refilled the glass, and drained it again. Now, I have drunk whiskey and I've seen other men drink whiskey, men that were man's men, but the burn from the drink always left them with that look on their faces. The look a person can only make after shooting that fire straight down their throat. But this man had more in the past few minutes than I had seen anyone before or since drink, and not once had that look crossed his face. He just stared straight ahead looking for something that wasn't, and might never have been. "Me, I'm nothing. Never was, never will be."

"Your friend Brett called you Your Honor, that's got to mean something, doesn't it?" I knew I was pressing my luck being new here, but there was something in this man's eyes and his thousand-yards stare that made me curious.

"I ran for mayor once. I lost. That asshole calls me that to remind me I lost. It only reminds me that he will never have the balls to do anything like that. He'll talk a big game, but he's a coward." He took another drink from his glass and pushed it to the edge of the bar. He wouldn't need the glass anymore. At the rate he was going, he wouldn't have the bottle much longer anyway. When I had sat down the bottle was mostly full. Now it was halfway gone and going fast. He smiled a half smile, but his eyes had a glassed over sadness to them. I followed them to see what he was looking at. Across the bar by the far door was a pool table. Standing by it was a beautiful blonde talking to someone. Even from this distance she was breathtaking. His eyes were locked on her and the sight of her brought a smile to his lips and a tear to his eye.

"Who is she?"

He blinked his eyes, taking a deep breath, and I wasn't sure if he was going to be pissed that I had figured out what he was looking at, or if he was going to be embarrassed that I had called him out on it. At first I thought our conversation was over and I would finish my drink in silence

before I left. "She is everything good about this town." He drank from the bottle. "The only thing good about this fucking town."

"You love her?"

He laughed to himself and shook his head. "I was a firefighter, EMT, arson investigator, I ran for mayor, I taught children, and I built buildings that will outlast the two of us. I've been married and divorced twice; I've fought the world and saved lives. I've also buried almost everyone I love, I've made mistakes, I've done good, I saved lives," He mentioned that last part twice. I thought of commenting about that, but he was at a place where he needed to speak, and I wasn't going to stop him. "To protect her I took a life, and then I walked away from her. She deserved better than what I could give her. It's been fifteen years and seeing her, well, she is still as beautiful as ever." The bottle was turned upside down and drained completely. It was like he needed the whiskey to wash the words out of his mouth. He put the bottle next to his glass and waved at the bartender. Nick brought him another bottle and walked away like he just handed over a beer instead of a full bottle of whiskey.

I waited for him to speak but he didn't for a while. It was clear he wouldn't, at least not on the subject of her. "Who did you kill?" I asked, suddenly in the back of my head I understood what Brett had mumbled under his breath. It wasn't about his mother, it was about murder. "Why did you do it?"

He took a deep breath, let out a sigh, and looked at her one more time. Her hair had waves in it like winds blowing through a field of hay. The lights of the bar reflected a small diamond in the side of her nose. I never found out how old she was, but from where I sat she was perfect; I could only imagine how breathtaking she must have been up close. "Why, it isn't my story to tell, it never was, and never will be. I already said enough about that subject. With all due respect, please look for your story somewhere else." He opened that new bottle and took a sip. While I sat in silence nursing my beer, this man sitting next to me was drinking himself to death. He had demons crawling through his head and the whiskey was the only way to silence them. He closed his eyes for a time, just longer than a standard blink, and opened them again. "I protected her and then I walked away. That was the hardest day of my life; harder than burying my sister, harder than anything before or since. She is the type of woman you compare all others to."

"Would you do it again?" I asked him not expecting a response, not knowing what I would say if he answered me.

He looked at me and in his eyes I could see that he wasn't fifty, or forty, he was older than any man should ever be. His life, whatever had come before that moment, had hardened him so that he could do what he had to do one night fifteen years ago. Fifteen years ago he was a firefighter, an EMT, a teacher, a hundred other things, but above all for one beautiful blonde, whose name I didn't know but to this day, when I close my eyes and I can still see her across that bar with the waves in her hair and the small diamond stud in her nose, he was a protector and a murderer. It destroyed him; he would never be mayor or anything other

than the drunk sitting next to me one night in Illinois. He thought for a second, smiled a half smile, the type of smile that you get from someone truly old and tired of a life of pain, looked at me, and said, "She's happy, she's safe. Her son has grown into a hell of a man. That's him with her now. She'll live her life, see her grandkids, they will tell their grandkids about her, and she will outlive the buildings I built through those stories. Me, I'll die and be forgotten before the dirt has covered me. If I got the chance to go back and change it all I wouldn't. Sometimes you need to fight for something with everything you got. Tooth and nail, blood and bone." A single tear hung in the corner of his eye. He turned away, put a small pile of bills on the bar, stood, and with a severe limp walked away, his bottle in hand. I finished my drink and left.

I spent that night in my truck and the next day I went to the local library and did some research. I found out his name and hers. I found out the name of the man that threatened her, a drug dealer and an abusive human being. My friend had been attacked one night while at work. I found that he took three bullets before he used his massive hands to make sure that she would never be threatened again. He did the town a favor and spent a month in the ICU as payment. The papers said even if he survived he would never walk again. I found that he was cleared of all charges except the ones he placed on himself, the heaviest charges a man could bear. I also found my third rule. Some stories shouldn't be told. Not by me, at least not fully.

I never mentioned him to anyone, but I thought of him often. When the mood would hit me, I would search for news on that small town, and from time to time I would even drive through. I would stop at the same bar, but I never saw him again. I never saw the beautiful blonde either, other than in my mind's eye every time I would see a hay field blowing in the wind.

A few nights ago one of those moods hit me. Twenty years have passed I saw his picture looking out from the computer screen; I saw his name and two dates written below it. He would be laid to rest in a small cemetery, but had no family to mourn him. I left that night so he wouldn't be forgotten as soon as the dirt hit him.

I stood by a man's grave that I only knew for a short time, but who had hung in the closets of my mind for all these years. As I turned to leave I saw an old woman with waves in her silver hair and a small diamond in her nose. She was still beautiful. She had only gotten better with age. As I passed by her she smiled and asked, "Did you know him well?"

Her eyes were heavy with tears. "No, I just had a drink with him once." I thought of asking her to tell me her story, so maybe I could finally put his story to rest with him, but I imagine her story was already told to her children and her children's children, and somewhere in that story was a man who tried, but in his heart never really walked away. The fact that she was standing here now told me she never walked away either.

Where is He?

C.A. Parra

The Person that is supposed to teach me wrong from right,
The special someone who tells me to be strong
And looks in my eyes and knows something is wrong and holds me tight
And says, "I'll always be by your side as long as Life goes on".
But Where Is HE?
The Other Human who gave me the Gift of Life,
That was supposed to teach me how to play a sport,
And motivate me to do things right
And give me his Full Support.
But Where Is He?
I don't want to feel Mad,
But I can't stand it,
He isn't dead so I can't be sad
Knowing that he is still living on this planet
Hopefully he can see me and look at what I've become
Being that I'm his Only Son,
But I don't want him to feel bad
Because he didn't tag along with me on my path
But there is one question I've got to Ask
Where Is He?

A Glass Too Full

Liz Chatman

I slipped away while the family slept. I couldn't idle in the waiting room any longer– their aunt was fine and would awaken fresh and bright later in the morning. There was nothing left for me to do here. I hesitated for a moment, watching the children sleep. Dark, sunken half circles hovered under their eyes, a rare sight on such small faces. They shouldn't be exposed to this so early– their perfect innocence was already vanishing. My eyes are permanently shadowed like that. I don't sleep much. Even less so in places like this.

I wandered through the empty, cavernous halls, worn out shoes too old to squeak on the polished linoleum floors. Dusty fluorescent lights of various yellowish hues aged the muddled blue wallpaper, peeling here and there at corners. The incessant beeping of machines echoed each other throughout the floor in waves like sonar, only accompanied by the periodical whirring of mechanical breathing. It sounded as if the whole hospital itself was huffing heavy, exhaustive breaths. I sipped my stale, lukewarm coffee and chewed the edge of the styrofoam cup.

"Come here," a low voice broke the steady hum. I flinched at the abruptness of it, and peered inside the dim room on my left. I leaned on the door frame.

"Do you need something? I can get a nurse for–" I glanced around the vacant hall.

"No, I don't need a nurse. Come sit down." I hesitated, lingering in the doorway. My eyes slowly adjusted but I could still only make out the old man's figure, sitting upright in the bed. I stepped inside, flicked on the first switch, and half the lights blinked on.

I sat down in the corner and studied him. Wrinkles were deeply embedded around his eyes, his mouth, and stretched across his forehead. White scratches of beard covered his chin and cheeks, and his matching mustache quivered slightly at his arduous breath. His disheveled, lackluster hair was the color of an overcast sky. His eyes, however, were clear as ice, sharp, and focused. Focused on me. I didn't have the courage to release any words into the still air, and didn't have any if I could. I waited. And I watched him.

"I'm dying," he stated, so simply. But the words held taut in the air.

"I'm sorry to hear that," I quietly replied. He huffed and chuckled softly, shaking his head.

"Believe me, I don't need any more empathy." I glanced up and half raised an eyebrow.

"So what do you need?"

He smiled, but said nothing. He just calmly watched me and waited. I knew what he wanted me to do. And he knew that I knew. What else would a dying man wish for? I sighed and crossed one leg on the other, propped my elbow on my knee, and held my chin in my hand. I squinted at him, examining him.

"Tell me why."

He remained silent for a moment, arranging his words carefully. I watched him expectantly. He rest his eyes on the arm of the chair in which I sat and he began in a solemn, pensive tone.

"I have done more than enough for two lifetimes. I have seen too much. I have felt.. so unbearably much." He paused, inhaling and exhaling slowly. "I have experienced all my body can bear, all my heart can hold, and all my soul can carry.. it's overflowing." He stopped and looked up at me, holding a distant gaze for a moment, the ice in his eyes melting and budding in the corners.

"I waited almost a year as a kid for my dog to come back, and even longer for my dad. I looked at my own growing reflection in my mom's proud eyes. I promised my brother I'd take care of her. I stepped off my home ground to help save it. I held my buddy when he bled out on that field. You remember him, don't you?" He stopped but didn't look up at me for an answer– he took a couple deep breaths, steadying himself. "I left parts of me across the sea but found it in myself to love a woman whole. I nearly drowned in joy when I first held my son in my hands. When my baby girl was born, too. Everything I ever did took hard work and patience, it wasn't ever easy but it was worth it. I watched my cubs grow up and build lives and move away. I watched my darling's numbers rise, and my own, too." He paused again, and I could hear the tremble in his breath. He raised his eyes to mine, lashes glistening. "I watched her hair turn silver and her skin grow soft... I kissed her for the last time."

He grew silent, and a certain sense of relief reverberated through the room. He spun his wedding band on his finger, gazing down at it with sad smile. He filled his lungs full and let it all out. He rubbed his eyes dry, sat up taller, straightened his shoulders, held his chin high, and looked me in the eyes.

"If you would..." He nodded to the machine next to his bed, quietly humming all along, green lights and switches, a bundle of tubes, branching away and weaving into his body. I let his every word softly land and settle for a moment in my mind. I rubbed my head and steepled my hands, pressing my index fingers to my lips, and nodded. I stood up, stepped to his bedside, and observed the machine for a brief moment before disregarding it. I leaned down and hugged the old man, felt his frail body letting go. I gently loosened his soul, cradled it in my arms, and carried it away.

HH Holmes 1&2

Heather Smith

Life Tips #1: Dating

Dino Green

When you find yourself attracted to someone, don't be embarrassed, they may have an interest in you too! All you have to do is follow these tips and you'll be dating in no time!

1. It's always a good idea to ask them if they're married. Even if they say no, it's important to follow them around for a few days to make sure.

2. Now that you've determined your potential partner is unmarried, it comes times to ask them for a date. You can do this in a variety of ways. For the timid or shy, ask them in a hand-written letter. For the spontaneous, orchestrate a fake job opportunity and when they go in for the interview, it's you - dressed in a tux and everything!

3. The first date is a crucial one. This can make or break a relationship. It is normal to be nervous on a first date, so to ease the tension bring a friend - and be sure to do some light flirting with the waitress, so your date sees how electric your charm is.

4. Just because you've been on a few dates with someone does not mean you're dating - this comes later. So be sure to play the field. Try tips 1-3 on some other people, like second cousins or former co-workers.

5. It's always important to listen to the one you're dating. But if you're like me, sometimes you just want to listen to some music. So if she starts talking too much, it's okay to put on the radio to tune her out.

6. Watch out for trigger words like "marriage" and "feelings" - quickly change the subject to something that suits your interests, like sports or hot wings.

7. To show your partner how eccentric you are, introduce her to new things, like raquetball and the pool boy, Juan.

8. An important question you're probably asking yourself is "When do I take the big step?" and to answer your question, "Right now!" Ask her to move in with you. Explain there isn't much room in the Buick, but if you put the seat back it's just like laying on a twin bed!

9. If you notice your partner is unhappy, it's always a good idea to buy her gifts. If you don't know what she likes, go through her purse while she's in the bathroom.

10. Finally, open communication is a must if you want to have a successful relationship. If you see a text on your partner's phone from someone you don't know, simply ask who Davey is and what "c u 2nite ;)" means. I'm sure he's just an old college roommate that's getting over a bad breakup.

Duration

Renée Stone

Love-struck maggots in her heart, fingers drumming to his rhythm,
She sways, happily numb, and trembles at an unmetered rhythm.

Fists keeping time on flesh drums, his hard melody in her ears,
She struggles, listless, dumb, as blue-purple notes mark his rhythm.

Rain molds dark locks to soft skin and mirrors her lulling movements,
Kissing soft ivory hills, rolling with her sternum's rhythm.

Water bullets staccato evolved sand and wound soot masses,
Dramatizing her crescendo of cries, her sad rhythm.

Bursting with ink on paper, singing sweet and short sopranos,
Cardinals decorate bark and serenade ears with soft rhythm.

Marimba screams quaking wooden skyscrapers, stringing feathers
With invisible wire—stony bodies drop at quick rhythm.

Thump, thump, thump—red carnage twists behind succulent marrow.
Hands pull at yellowed tendrils, foam spews: exit stage left, Rhythm.

Fractured

Kris Kemp

Hypotenuse

Edwin Alanis Garcia

Beware the Kalends of April, for it is a fool's holiday. When deception becomes synonymous with humor, the whole world goes to shit. Everyone is suddenly pregnant for the day. Atheists become born again Christians. Friends announce relationships with nonexistent online personas. None of it was funny. I've earned my bitterness: On my tenth birthday I was promised a pizza party by my soccer team and was greeted at the pizzeria by an empty dining room and a card signed by my step-dad-slash-coach that read, "PSYCH! April Fools!" I've been cautious ever since.

It felt like another malicious joke when my attempt at studying for a geometry midterm had been thwarted by my passing out on my textbook at around midnight. I unwittingly used my tongue as a bookmark during my nap, so my drool ushered in a great migration of ink off the page. The remnants of an undecipherable theorem were printed on my right cheek.

Soccer's not a real sport, anyway.

I chugged two glasses of water. I was still thirsty, but four glasses would've brought more unnecessary bathroom breaks. I scrubbed my face and rinsed Pythagoras' work down the bathroom sink. My phone started convulsing on my desk. A classmate.

"Hey, Ed. Ready for the test?"

"So you didn't hear."

"Hear what?"

"Dude, Mr. Wizard is dead. It's all over the news."

Naturally I was inclined to assume another cruel joke, but sadly that was not the case. At 6:15 A.M. that morning, Professor Leslie Lehan, aka Mr. Wizard (a name granted because of the mathematics professor's uncanny resemblance to the beloved science guru), had jumped off the roof of the UIC science building. Ed, who had the tendency of half-heartedly cramming for exams the morning of, was ecstatic. He was then remorseful, and then awkwardly quiet. There would be no class that day.

I spent the rest of the morning watching television. A Stooges marathon was on a local cable access channel. Moe pulled Larry by the ear with a set of pliers and then bonked him on the chin. Larry glowered at Moe; Moe reciprocated in kind. And the stooges were suddenly silent. For a moment it appeared that someone had forgotten his lines. The exaggerated anger in their brows drooped into genuine unease, and it was clear that something was wrong. The scene stilled my lungs and

made me queasy. I changed the channel.

More television. Channel 27: The cute girl from Who's The Boss and the bitchy girl from 90210 are trying to cast a spell. Channel 28: John Ritter checks out a lady and wipes out on his bike as the theme song from Company jingles away. Channel 29: Martin Short and Steve Martin are a pair of gringo mariachis. Channel 40: BBC World News report. A mathematics professor at UIC is the latest death in a string of suicides carried out by scientists. Witnesses to the deaths reported that the victims were frantically babbling about deformed worlds, malign pranks, absent truths, God's sick joke, etc.. I was suddenly reminded of a story Mr. Wizard shared with the class, about an ancient cult of Pythagoras and something about a theorem making them go crazy. But the more I tried to remember the details of the story, the more it seemed to slip away until I was back at a BBC report about Placido Domingo and The Other Guy.

Mr Wizard's funeral was that Saturday at Holy Unity Church of Chicago. I deduced that someone in the church managed to have his death ruled as an accident. My step-dad dropped me off at the entrance of the cathedral, then honked the horn and waved at the parents of one of his soccer kids.

Soccer's not a real sport, anyway.

I sat in a back pew and watched for other students and instructors as they passed by. I discovered which of my peers and professors were Catholic by keeping track of who made the sign of the cross near the altar: Two fingers over the head, then over the chest, then dangling in the air.

The funeral mass began. The priest spoke in Latin. The gathered crowd—myself included—zoned out. It wasn't until the priest returned to English that I began to feel ill.

"We return you, Leslie, to the hands of our Heavenly Father, with gratitude that He had blessed us with your wisdom and compassion. In the name of The Father and The Son."

The priest paused and stared out into the congregation. Even from the back pew I noticed the glowing beads of sweat on his forehead. He wanted to say more, but stopped and continued to gaze at the parishioners, who were by then shifting uncomfortably in their seats. It was clear that the priest was forgetting something and was scanning the crowd for a prompt. We were as lost as he was. A woman coughed.

"Amen," he finally said.

"Amen," we said.

I decided to walk home after the service. I thought about Mr. Wizard and his class, and how the university would be able to find his replacement. I then thought about his alleged final moments as the police tried to talk him down from the ledge: His swollen, bloodshot

eyes filled with six-and-a-half decades of lonely insight that all seemingly failed him as he thrashed his head back and forth and wailed, "It's all wrong! Why can't you see it's all wrong?" just before releasing the last sound to ever escape his lips, a sound which was not a formula or a historical anecdote, but a single sob projected with the force of every ounce of breath left in his body.

The light at the intersection jumped from green to red. Two young boys in soccer uniforms stepped onto the crosswalk. I crossed the intersection and glanced back at the traffic light. Ineffable questions arose. A knot tightened in my stomach. My knees trembled. I fought back a barrage of cries accumulating at the core of my throat. I thought about Mr. Wizard and God and Pythagoras and my soccer team, and before I was said to have passed out, I remembered my step-dad's birthday card.

Miscommunication

Cole Brauer

Give the Woman a Break

Ontario Kostka

It's startling, the way she sacrifices herself for us and yet is never given a single thank you. We carve her out like she is just a slab of ice waiting to be a sculpture, and yet the end product is never good enough for us. She will never be good enough for us, and perhaps that is why we never offer any gratitude. Maybe to us, she doesn't deserve it. But when I look at what we have done and what she has become, I can't fathom being ungrateful. She has given us everything and we have taken it all from her. We will keep cutting and molding her to our will even when she screams for us to stop, her violent winds battering us and yet we hear nothing but our own suffering. When she shakes with fear of what tomorrow will bring, we curse her for it as it rips away the lives of our loved ones and our homes. What we don't realize is after a while, nothing will be left to carve. She will be a melted statue on the ground, and we will never be able to use her again.

Blood Orange Paul Schroeder

For the Good Times

Sam T. Jensen

"I'm not unhappy. I'm just tired." Phil lied to his wife. He took off his glasses and set them on the night stand. The clink from the metal frames was an instant trigger for Diane. She turned back to her side of the bed and sobbed quietly.

The next morning, Phil woke up to the sound of blaring music and his daughter singing along to it. A normal person would ignore this. Phil was not a normal person. "It's my one day off, Lizzie," he calmly stated to his teenage daughter, "can you please let me sleep a little longer?" Either Phil said this in a harsher tone than he anticipated or Lizzie was simply an over-emotional 16-year old girl who just got in a fight with her boyfriend and that was so the last thing she needed right now. "OH MY GOD," she began, "IT'S ONE FREAKING SONG I LIKE!"

Phil nodded and walked back to bed only to hear whispers of Lizzie complaining to her mother. Phil knew it wasn't right for his daughter to talk to him that way. *What went wrong?* he often pondered. He raised her the best he could, always striving to be a positive role model. What he wouldn't give to experience those warm, good times again, when the kids were younger.

"Phil, can we talk?" Diane asked. "What about?" Phil responded, knowing exactly what it was about. "Well, the way you talked to Lizzie." Phil interrupted, "No. I'm not having it today." Phil threw on his work boots and jacket and walked out the door. His son Michael was waiting at the bus stop. "Dad can I have $4 for a field trip? It's due today," Mike inquired as Phil got in his Jeep. It seemed that every time Mike needed something, it was due a week ago and Phil was the worst dad in the world if he didn't help him, whether it was for school or for fun.

Phil screeched out of the driveway and sped to the nearby beach. He sat on top of his car and watched the waves roll in. He smiled as he remembered building sand castles there with Lizzie years ago. A policeman approached him. "I'm sorry, am I not allowed to park up here?" Phil asked. "Oh, no, you're okay. Not having car troubles, are you?" the policeman asked. "No. I just like it up here," Phil replied. "Me too," the policeman said, "I've lived here twenty years, I'll never grow tired of it."

Phil and the policeman talked for close to an hour. It was then Phil realized the time and checked his phone for angry text messages from Diane. There were twelve. Phil's expression turned to embarrassment and anxiety. "Hey, I've got to go, I, uh." Phil forgot what words were. The policeman stopped him, "Phil, wouldn't you give anything to go back to that simpler time? When the kids were little?" Phil agreed, "I'd give

everything."

"Go ahead," the policeman insisted, "walk down to the beach. Your family's waiting for you." Phil nervously laughed. "But I have to warn you," the policeman stated, "anything you say or do may have repercussions on the present." Phil got back in the Jeep. He looked in the rearview mirror as the policeman he was talking to started to fade away.

"Di? Liz? Hey, I'm sorry about earlier!" he shouted up the stairs to no avail. He then drove back to the beach, where it suddenly appeared brighter and more vibrant than before. In the distance he saw his family. They were all laughing and having fun. He rushed to see them. As he got closer he noticed the finer details - Lizzie with braces, Michael in a stroller, and Diane ten years younger and twenty pounds lighter.

"Dad! Come build sand castles!" Lizzie excitedly yelled for him. Thinking he was in a dream, Phil raced by her side and played with her. The more he played with his family he realized he had actually been given the opportunity to go back in time. He didn't know how or why, but he took advantage of the opportunity.

"The sun's going away, dear," Diane whispered to Phil as they sat holding hands in the warm sand, "I think we should pack up." "No, give me a few more minutes," Phil argued, "I need it." He got up and dusted the sand from his legs. "Lizzie, wake up, let's find sea shells." Lizzie untangled herself from her favorite pink polka-dot towel, yawned, and followed her dad into the water.

Phil and Lizzie took turns going underwater and finding the best sea shells, or cool-looking rocks, because Lizzie couldn't tell the difference. Meanwhile, Diane was gathering up the towels and beach balls, trying to hurry them along. "Don't come back up until you find me the most perfect special one." Phil instructed his daughter. She took a big breath and went under.

After a few seconds, Phil began to panic. He went in after her. He could barely see without his glasses on, especially in the murky beach water at night. He reached around and all he felt were rocks and sand. He popped his head back up long enough to scream for help then went back in. He felt a clump of hair and saw Lizzie struggling to get unstuck from a crevasse on the lake floor.

After only a minute of Phil and now Diane attempting to save their daughter, she stopped moving. Only moments later Phil was able to rip her from the crack. Blood dripped down her face and on Phil's hands. He set her on a bed of sand as Diane sobbed uncontrollably. All Phil could do was hold Lizzie's unconscious body in his arms until the police arrived.

As Lizzie was being taken into an ambulance with her mom and baby brother following, a policeman approached Phil. "Is she going to be okay?" he asked. "I did everything I could, I," Phil stammered as he realized the person he was talking to was the same policeman he met that morning. "This is your fault. You did this to me. What kind of cruel

game are you playing here? Take me back to the future!" Phil demanded.

"I'm afraid the future you're speaking of is in the past." the policeman explained. "Your Jeep is parked on the other side of that sand dune. You can follow the ambulance and witness the fate of your daughter firsthand or you may drive home and go to sleep, praying everything you witnessed was a terrible, terrible dream. Good luck." The policeman walked away.

Phil stood frozen until he was the only one left standing on the beach. He then decided to go back home. He opened the door and headed straight to his bedroom. He laid restless, staring at the wallpaper and many subtle differences of his room from ten years ago.

"Dad, wake up!" Mike shouted, "I need that $4 so I can still go on the field trip!" Phil smiled as he reached for his glasses on the night stand and took out four singles from his wallet. "Did he wake you up again?" Diane asked. "It's okay, Diane," Phil responded, "it just means more time I get to spend with my kids this morning. I'll go start some french toast for Lizzie." Phil was halfway down the hall when the familiar sound of Diane crying was heard.

Phil hurried back into his room. Mike was consoling his mom. "No, no, no." Phil repeated as he ran down the hall to Lizzie's room. It was then Phil realized it was not a dream. He lost his little girl forever. He lost his everything.

walk with dog

Lucy Dankova

WHO

Linda J

Who are these people . . . on this train
Faces from my dreams?
I know none by name.

No stops are announced over the PA
Conductors are ghosts
I didn't have to pay.

The world is silent behind the pane
Beverly Hills is shedding snow flakes
while I sway with the rhythm of the train.

Only Time Can Endure

Jessica Rose

It was the house at the end of the street
No white picket fence, the grass dipped deep
I remember walking to the porch
3 steps and the red door opens
Tension slams through my chest
And an ache, lonesomeness,
Invisibly clawing the walls
Silent screams crescendo down the halls
My still eyes gaze down
Oh, little grey hound
Key to the locks
Insight
His gloomy eyes smear into mine
A growl escapes his locked jaw
Mimicking coldness and dying love,
I feel you ache, how I feel you
The warmth absent
Candles and blankets dare to replace
Those long and treacherous nights
No grace
No lipstick, only misery
I envision your melted face
I feel you ache, how I feel you
Stiffness, tears
From one step in, and my mind perceives
Pain, echoes, passing of unfulfilled dreams
In the hound's eyes, these empty floors
I feel you ache, how I feel you,
Gracefully,
Only time can endure.

cement head

Stephen Clark Okawa

i woke up next to the trash again
nuzzled close to crap people didn't want
got tired of.
i wiped the corners of my mouth with a gum wrapper.
it's okay,
the trash doesn't mind.
no need for formality OR ceremony,
we are well-acquainted;
this seems to be
my milieu.
but even the undesirable gets taken from you,
too,
as each thursday
around seven a.m.
a city-employed groom
dressed in puke green
rides in on his steel, front-loading, mastodon
and, just before the summer sun strikes
her cheeseburger wrapper veil,
he whisks his bride –
last night's bedfellow –
away,
empties her out

returns her into my outstretched arms
and shakes his head in disapproval.

i should be grateful that better men built sidewalks for me to sleep on
(but i'm not)

i should be happy my taxes are put to good use
(though i've never paid mine)

i should find a place that'll have me
(i would
but vagrancy laws are a bitch, and park benches don't quite sing me to sleep
the way the streets and buildings
often do)

Upon Reaching the Turnpike

Brendon Kolodziej

Upon reaching the turnpike, that goddamn tollway, I felt for my wallet that I knew should be quietly waiting its removal in my back pocket. My khakis had slowly turned a shade of dark brown as the rain gently fell from above. It was nighttime, the cars on the highway beside me whooshed by in the distorted figure of shooting rockets. I stumbled around the neglected land that one always had the pleasure of seeing through their car windows while passing by, thanking their lucky starts that they were not actually there standing on it. The aging cigarette butts seemed to outnumber the blades of grass, though, hardly distinguishable now that the summer had long since departed, and with it, seized the lives of common roadside vegetation. It was hard to keep myself from falling over, curling into a ball, and giving up as would an animal after being hit by a truck, fatally wounded, yet still alive. Oh, the pleasantness of road-kill! I had just stepped over one with caution: the contorted remains of a possum. My vehicle was one in the same, now miles away in the black distance.

With my left hand in my pocket fingering through loose change, I extracted my wallet—empty. No license, no cash, no credit card—empty. Why have one? I grasped the icy rail that ran down the side of the road; my breath, drifting in visible clouds from my body, wandered away into the air. God, why couldn't I? The approaching exit sign said two miles. Isn't it strange the way one's mind always yearns for the easy way out, which is, quite often, nothing other than death? I would have rather died right then, happily consenting the rest of my potential days on this Earth to age and sink down into the soil with the cigarette butts and the flattened possum. I would have rather jumped in front of the speeding Pontiac approaching me from behind than have to endure another two miles of this painless torture. But all sad and irrational thoughts aside, I couldn't seem to shake the feeling that there was something about tonight that was a little bit more disturbing than the consequences of a dead battery or a shitty engine.

After walking on and leaving the informative sign in the past, I approached a sight unknown. Something bright, not with luminance, but with character, shape and design, stood only a few yards ahead, the presence of which made me shutter. It was a girl, she was pregnant, and her long summer dress fluttered wildly in the cool midwinter gusts—the kinds that leave you with the sensation of a million little needles prodding at your skin when it hits you in the face. Lipstick was smeared across her frost-bitten cheeks. Her nose a bright shade of pink, her eyes glowing with emotion from some recent happening unbeknownst to

me, but obviously traumatic, and with tousled locks of hair encircling, streaming across her face and around her neck like a scarf, I ran towards her, ready to offer any assistance needed. However, she took off running when she saw me coming up from behind. I yelled after her, "Let me help you!" But she only picked up pace.

It was no use; she ran faster than I could get the words out of my mouth, she was already twice the distance she was from me when I had first noticed her existence. At a loose jog I followed. I was too exhausted from the traumas of my own recent happenings to run. Eventually, as I knew would likely be the case, my smoker's lungs got the best of me; I bent over and pressed my hands to my knees, fighting for a breath. When I looked up, however, I saw that the girl was doing to same. She had stopped and was sitting cross legged in the mud.

"I'm not going to hurt you!" I yelled, now on my way again.
I approached her with care and sympathy, body shivering in the dampness of my clothing. She, on the other hand, was amazingly still. The cold seemed to have no effect on her; the rain only doused her hair and clothes, but left her skin with an unexpected aridity. "Why are you out here on the road?" I asked, placing my coat over her shoulders. "You're barefoot!" I cried. "Who's left you like this?"

She never offered a response. After gazing into her eyes, however, I suppose I got the answer I was looking for. In a sense, her eyes told all that needed to be known. Her lips never moved, yet those eyes spoke to me in a way that words could have never succeeded in doing. The blue dress that covered her naked figure, void of any patterns, style, or brand, drooped down to her ankles and casted a shadow over her unprotected feet. We strode on, and as we moved, she began to struggle to keep her balance, more than once nearly falling into the roadway, now quiet and vacant of its usual traffic. I held her up with an arm around her waist; she bowed her head towards the ground, tears dripping from wilted lashes and onto my hand that was entwined with hers.
A sign, littered with bullet holes and graffiti, informed us that the exit was now only half a mile away. As we passed it by, the girl fell to her knees. With all her weight dropping downward, I lost my grip, and she hit the dirt hard. After a failed attempt at standing, she rolled over onto her backside.

"What's wrong?" I asked, beginning to panic, feeling the tension of indecision swelling inside my chest. "Who are you? Where can I take you? You've got to talk to me, honey, you're not well!" But still, she said nothing.

I picked her up and held her in my arms. In one odd motion, she dangled her head back and tightly shut her eyes. I walked for as long as I could; I strove hard to get to the exit, trying only to save the life of this poor girl, stranger she may have been. It didn't matter; she was a person, just like me, just like you. So young and beautiful, what a disgrace it

would have been for her to fade away with the possum and the ends of cigarettes that were scattered all around it. What a shame it would have been for her to leave this Earth!

I pressed on until I could no longer. A blast of pain suddenly shot its way up my spine, and I collapsed down to my knees, still cradling her in my arms. She moaned, like one does while in a deep sleep, and looked around once or twice with empty eyes. "Where have you come from?" I asked in a last-ditch effort to try and ignite some mutual communication. "Where have you come from?"

Moving aside the golden tresses of sopping hair that blocked her from seeing, she looked up and whispered in my ear the only words she would ever say to me: "I descended with the rain."

Thunder crackled overhead, and I looked down in amazement as her now liquefied body seemed to seep through my fingers and pool in a sort of widespread mere on the grass beneath my feet. Before I could contain what so little was left of her being, she was gone. In a puddle of lifeless water I sat motionless with an unfilled dress strewn across my lap, a sleeping infant curled in my arms, gleaming and undisturbed, palms shaking, breathless because of the cold. Overhead the clouds parted and gave light to the moon. I stared up at it with a sense of magnificent deception quarrelling within me: the surge of a hundred thousand thoughts indolently pervading through my tormented mind.

Face of Stone

Heather Smith

I Am Pretty Sure I Had An Exorcism

Heather Smith

It's different.

Has anyone ever told you to try something but warned you it may be "different"? In some cases this can be a good thing, others not so much. Let me take this time to tell you that I have just experienced the most awkward event in my entire life and if you happen to know me that should be a shocking statement. As those people would know I have lived through being sneezed on by a walrus, nearly exploded in a car, and the strange adventures I always seem to get caught up in. But this time... I am not sure I can fully recover or explain what happened to me.

I would like to start this story about a week or so before today. I have been ill for some time now, but no doctor has ever been able tell me exactly what was wrong. So many medications later and my mom was about ready to kill me because she was so tired of calling me in to school, so tired of taking off work to take me to the doctor, she was through with me just being me as I usually am: sick. A woman that works for my mother recommended we attend a meeting at her church, a healing. I did not know this woman; I had never met her, I couldn't recognize her name, and I didn't even know what religion she was. And frankly, I was perturbed that she had decided to take my life as her business; her dutiful business to God to bring me to this church and save me (without being asked for that matter).

In my head, I guess I was picturing one of those televangelists with some crazy 80's suit on, his face adorned with a pair of square gold-rimmed glasses in a giant church to be my "healer". I pictured him running hysterically up and down the seemingly endless aisles whacking the ailing patrons in the noggin and screaming like a madman, "Healed! You're healed! Praise the lord!!!" and then the blind would see and the lame would be instantly acrobats. I suppose I was disappointed at what I did see. It only makes sense that I would be; how could any church be that kooky and fun?

Well let's jump to the ride to this church. My mom seemed very nervous as we both had no idea what we were going to be doing. She told me we were to meet this woman at some run-down barber shop and she would have us drive behind her the rest of the way. A part of me wanted to believe this was some fascinating Batman scenario where no one could know the secret location of the Batcave. For one of the few times in my life I was not listening to my illogical side. Instead, the coherent voice inside my head told me I was not in a dream-like comic book and I should be suspicious as this flowchart seemed fishy. I now

wish I had listened to myself even more so and not bothered going at all.

So we get to this church, the usual churchy smell of dusty old books perfumed the air. Immediately I felt uncomfortable and needed a second to myself. I went to the washroom and I swear someone knocked on the door but no one was there when I opened it. So we were escorted to an average-looking chapel and we sat. We sat and listened to very many gospel songs that all seemed to blend together into one incredibly long song. Then, we sat some more. I honestly have no idea how long we sat but it felt like forever to me.

While on our marathon sit I noticed the people in the room and what type of church this was. There was an older looking woman with medium grey hair accompanied by a younger man; I assumed her son. She had a bun in her hair that looked like a perfect woven basket and a very mod black sweater with white tube-ish trimming. She looked just as lost as I felt in there. There were also a few other older women in all matching clothes, this women is all purple; that one is all green. I became aware that my mom and I were the only white people at the church after examining the posters around this was a Baptist church. I do not mean that in any type of racist way but I was slightly frightened because I know that Baptists can get very "into" religion and I didn't think I could, as a person, handle people passing out or convulsing all over the place.

After a long while of wondering if this was the reason I was here in this foreign place, to listen to some songs I thought "Well this isn't that bad. I can handle this for a little bit longer to appease Mom." Just then, the bun-headed woman went up to the alter telling us she would start us off with some Bible verses and prayers before she healed us. She rambled for some time and I stared at the ceiling mostly or looked outside. People started putting their hands to the heavens and I had an epiphany. This whole scene I was part of looked so much like a cult. If we were in a field instead of this chapel we would be arrested for crazy chanting cult behavior. I swear to God (no pun intended) I saw every single person in that room do a "Seig Heil!" Hitler left arm in the arm gesture. I stood there, doubting my own sanity and wondering if I would get out of this cult alive to tell the tale.

When we went in there it was about seven-o'clock and still sort-of sunny in that almost summer type of way that the days seem longer and nights cut short. I wondered as I sat through the impromptu sermon how long it too would last. I have been to a Lutheran church a handful of times in my life and it never interested me and I believe that could explain some of this story. I was terrified of what the healing would bring. And I once again should have listened to myself. I was the lucky first to be healed. The woman raised my arms so I was in full-Moses splitting the waters position. She began saying some thank you Jesuses and that sort of thing and my mom put her hand on me to comfort me so I wouldn't be afraid. Unfortunately her hand was on my butt so it was even more

awkward (I doubt she was aware of that because my mom was really into it). The bun-lady pushed her hand on my stomach and head. I closed my eyes because I was scared and found that the woman was steadily moving closer and closer to me until I could feel her hot breath on my face. My knees buckled and I bent back until I couldn't take the pushing anymore and fell backwards. I was so fearful that no one had their hands behind me and I was just going to plummet to the floor. Luckily the bun-woman's (maybe) son was there and gently caught me.

Now would be a good time to tell you I get very twitchy when I am nervous and began my twitches as soon as I arrived in the church. By mid-fall to the floor I was at full-twitch. I fell to my knees and then attempted to sit Indian-style but was pushed back by Buns onto my back. She kept pushing my stomach and head and yelling at my "evil spirits" to leave. I am not sure even now if I had a healing or an exorcism. Eventually, Bunhead started speaking in what I thought to be some sort of broken Jamaican-spanglish. "R r r r r r rr r taaaaa maaaaayyyaaaa Riiiiiiiibbbbbaattttttttaaaaa yaaaaaaaaa!" She was absolutely screaming in my ear as if I was no longer a person but a demon she was fighting; she was also spitting on my face a lot.

Now they laid a white what I saw as black sheet on me and let me lay on the floor as she waltzed around me with her crazy voodoo talk. I was twitching away on the floor which I guess they took as I still had my demons fighting away with her. I didn't know how long this horrible torture would last so I closed my eyes and pretended to be "into it" like everyone else, thinking maybe that would make her stop. Another woman started the chanting Jamaican in some other dialect somewhat similar to the first. They let me lay there on the floor for a period of time and took my glasses off and finally I just crawled my way up until I was standing. My mother was crying because I guess she was touched or something even though I was pretending.

I got my glasses, now smudged, from some random woman and it was my mom's healing turn. She shook like I did—I am not sure out of nervousness like me or she watched me and subconsciously thought that's what is supposed to happen and then twitched without knowing it. After, she lay there on the ground like me and then got up. We sat on the abnormally loud pews for maybe ten minutes watching someone else get "saved" when my mom said she was nauseous. Her friend said that was God trying to cleanse her of evils.

My mother throws up a few times a week (not purposely) with no help from God, so who had the right to say it was his doing now? I felt like I was going to vomit about ten times by then since I had been in the church itself before I had even been "healed". So my mother ran out of the chapel with her friend and vomited in the bathroom, leaving me all alone in the scary church full of people with Jesus fever. I was there alone for about five seconds and retreated to the bathroom through the

labyrinth to find my mom puking everywhere.

When she was empty, we went back into the chapel to find another woman on the floor, throwing up on the white sheet they had draped over me (which really makes me wonder where it had been before it was on me...). I was so desperate to get out of there that when they opened the door to throw the sheet outside. I must have looked worse than an Ethiopian chained up across the street from a Pizza Hut wanting to lunge for that door and escape. I am surprised that my mom got caught up in that stuff and was crying, but also, I was astonished she couldn't see the sheer longing to get out of there on my face. I kept spelling things like "please get me out of here" and "I want to leave" on her leg with my nails but she didn't get it. The thought thoroughly crossed my mind that I may never get out of that horrible place. "What if she wants to heal everyone into this room, there must be fifteen people in here. It could take hours and hours!" Immediately, I looked at the window, instinctively as if I was a professional shadow-reader and could know what time it was. Darkness outside of the window looked black. I knew I was trapped in this downward spiral of psychosis and honestly could not tell if I had been there six hours or five.

When the Bunlady asked if anyone else wanted to be saved before she gave us some last thoughts no one said anything. I was so pleased that I could finally leave that dreadful place. Then someone raised their hand. All my hopes and dreams were lost in that split second. Another twenty minutes I assume went by. Then finally, some last thoughts but I was too excited about leaving to pay any type of attention to the people. It was the feeling deep in your heart when your love is walking towards you. They justified their so-called speaking in tongues as proof of God truly helping us. But I just think that they wanted to talk like crazy people and who doesn't sometimes? At the end they said God loves me and wants me to worship him and I thought of course he does...This is a cult... And then they said, "You will never forget what you saw here today". I screamed to myself (in my head), "OF COURSE I WON'T I AM SCARRED FOR LIFE!" That was the longest two hours I have ever had to endure in my life.

Arizona

Faith Damm

It was hot, almost summer, early in the afternoon. I had dreadlocks, I was 18, it was almost my birthday. I was severely depressed and very sick. I remember vowing not to take any Vicodin during the trip back. I would be driving and didn't want to endanger Gabby as she accompanied me back home. I did not stick to that, I took Vicodin all day, everyday. I hid it. She never knew, still doesn't know. She doesn't need to know. She was tall and thin, and so was I. I was always jealous of her for some reason, though.

Most of my stuff had been packed the night before, but we finished loading the last few things in silence. No one knew what to say. Everything was all packed and I took another look at my empty room. Everything in that house was tan; tan walls, tan carpet, tan landscape when you look outside. I took another look at the spare room where I used to make art. There was, and still is, a charcoal stain on the carpet. A dark black spot in an all tan room. I slept in the same bed as Gabby the night before we left, the bed in the spare room. My bed was already packed. I don't think I slept well. I remember waking up that morning to Gabby sitting outside by the pool drinking coffee. I was angry at myself that I didn't do that more often. I was angry at myself for being so depressed while I lived there. I stuffed any internal voices telling me not to leave way deep down inside of me and convinced myself that moving back home was a good idea.

I've never seen my brother cry that way. I put my truck in reverse and started pulling out of the garage as I, through very teary eyes, watched him lean on the garage door that led to the house for support as he sobbed uncontrollably. He hid his face behind the door. I didn't even make it halfway out of the garage before I put the truck back into park and ran to him for a second, last hug goodbye. He couldn't even look at me. He could barely lift his arms to hug me back. I don't remember what I said, I think all I could get out was, "I love you." After all the fighting we did while I was there I finally realized how much I meant to him, and he to me. I got back in the truck and Gabby, who was sitting in the passenger seat, was also crying after having watched me hug my brother one last time. We rode in silence for quite a while until she tried to comfort me. I don't remember what she said. I don't remember any of the road trip up until we stopped in Sedona. I only remember being in Sedona because that was the only time during the whole trip that I felt at peace and like I was where I needed to be. I should have turned around right then and there, and I knew it. Everyone knew it.

I remember listening to the Shins a lot on that trip. I only remember bits and pieces of the rest of the ride home, which were all very unenjoyable. Gabby drove for maybe two hours during the entire trip, and complained almost the whole time. She complained a lot about missing her boyfriend, who she had been away from for only a few days. She looks back fondly on this trip, but I do not. I would never take a road trip with her again. I remember we stopped on the side of the road somewhere to take pictures at sunset. I remember I was wearing a headscarf the entire time because my dreadlocks were not fully formed. They made me self-conscious. Almost as soon as I arrived back in Illinois I un-did them. It took hours of my mom, my brother's girlfriend, and me combing them out. A whole bottle of conditioner. They no longer seemed appropriate for where I was living and what state of mind I was in. I wish I would have kept them anyway. Re-reading my journal entries from this trip, I wrote in big bold letters, underlined a million times, "Arizona is not my past." I kept stuffing the sadness and regret deep down inside and trying to ignore it. I felt numb almost all the way back home; I wasn't allowing myself to feel the weight of it all just yet.

We crossed the border back into Illinois and I started to recognize things. I had an overwhelming sense of defeat, failure, sadness. It was grey and raining on the day that we got back home to Frankfort. When I dropped Gabby off at her house she invited me in to say hello to her parents. I said no because I needed some space and time to process being back home. I cried the entire way back to my house after I dropped her off. I remember wondering where all of the other cars were. It seemed like I was the only person in town. I sat in my truck in my driveway for a few minutes trying to collect myself. When I walked in my mom was waiting in the kitchen for me. I hugged her and started crying again and said something along the lines of, "I want to go back, I don't want to be here. I made a mistake." She was very cold because she too was disappointed and said, "Well, you made your choice and now you have to live with it."

Testing

Kelsey Kreger

Someone vomited, a sickly sweet smell emanated from the floor.
My nose searched for the clean breeze coming from an open door.

I ran to the shampoo aisle, an artificial garden filled my rotted nose.
Bottles leaked blue puddles on shelves, and sat in untidy rows.

A mother in red plaid pajamas was deciding between Dove or Olay.
Her child tugged her pants down, her lace purple thong on display.

I needed some nail polish down the next aisle.
Pretty in Pink and Sassy Green graffiti on the tile.

The jars were see-through what more did they need?
To test, no faith unless the bottle is open...and then they may believe.

moth

Lucy Dankova

Blackfish and Mindsets

Jessica Rose

I have this mindset that we are terrible and selfish, with skimming thoughts and stupid practices. And recently, I noticed how perspectives alter as we grow older. You notice events and begin to critique harshly. I don't enjoy skimming topics anymore. I dig deeper and research until I'm satisfied. I research to tame the billions of questions in my head. I don't want to be naïve anymore. I have this mindset that we can change the world, with little or vast impact. And everything helps. Every little lift. I feel like we don't value the fire we have in ourselves at this young and awkward transformation toward adulthood. We used to be so fickle when we were young. These thoughts compress into me, wrap and fold until my heart is racing and my mind is seeking solutions.

We should be the change in this mad world. We have the power; we just need confidence in ourselves. We need to train our minds that we are the ones with the reins.

It all began with the documentary *Blackfish*; the idea that orcas were being abused and neglected on a daily basis can make a demon manifest out of me. The grueling thought that this has been happening for decades haunts me. And the saddest view is an orca with a flopped fin because of lack of air pressure; he cannot gallop in the oceans and strengthen his bones as he was intended to. This breathtaking animal is forced to live in a bathtub all his or her life. Imagine cold water enfolding you, surrounded by whales from opposite sides of the worlds, fighting to stay alive, and then having to perform shows for three-inch fish—all your life. No family, no ocean. All the whale learns is captivity and tricks. I swear I can feel the ache of their broken spirits! The lights go out and the orcas reside in this black trap all night. Truly imagine how terrifying and lonesome that would be. And it has driven me to the point where I contacted the filmmaker on these issues. The sweetheart of a lady exemplifies such passion and commitment toward her research regarding SeaWorld and orcas.

These creatures are beyond us: brilliant and statistically proven with high intelligence and human-like emotions.

In addition, I really adored this documentary because it was heavily researched. I love to do my own research and director Gabriel Cowperthwaite dug her soul into this for two years. "For two years we were bombarded with terrifying facts, autopsy reports, sobbing interviewees, and unhappy animals – a place diametrically opposite to its carefully refined image" (http://blackfishmovie.com/filmmaker). Can you imagine living in 1 room for your entire life? Imagine a 12,000-pound orca living in a bathtub. The death of SeaWorld trainer

Dawn Bracheau does not surprise me in the slightest! These highly intellectual and beautiful species are kept in a cage all their lives and expected not to bite the hand that feeds it? I'd be yapping away! They say that Tilikum, currently residing at Seaworld Orlando, went (or perhaps is currently in) a stage of psychosis. A psychosis is a severe mental disorder in which thought and emotions are so impaired that contact is lost with reality. We are robbing these killer whales from life, trapping them in a tub enclosure for the sake of a half hour show, fleeting memories, cringe-worthy acts, and music that harms the animals' eardrums.

You should definitely fear a whale with a mental disorder. Inhumane.

I'm team Tilikum. I'm team freedom. I'm team gaze at these animals and marvel at their beauty from the distance of a ship and never disrupt their environment in which they reside. Killer whales are meant to roam the ocean in large families. If you jab them, ship them in trucks, give them 3 inch fish, train them—expect to die because you deserve death to hit you faster than the sound of your alarm clock at 4am in the morning. If you are involved in this inhumane process of capturing our beloved sea creatures, I will find you and knock Satan out of your filthy hands.

All I want is peace. I want to see these animals with strong dorsal fins, hiccupping conversations, gliding in the sea with their beautiful families and adorable offspring.

This idea takes me to this mindset: you will either sit on your hands for the rest of your life or you will be the change you wish to see in the world. SeaWorld is just the beginning of change regarding the exposure of media and abused animals. They're many more cruel and devastating events in the world—such as Ringing Bros Circus. Ringing Bros Circus is responsible for abusing elephants, lions, tigers, bears, and many other animals involved. It's a tragedy. I am going to write a documentary on Ringling Bros, but that's another story in itself.

Furthermore, I talked to my dad and mom about *Blackfish*; they refuse to watch the documentary. And this aggravates me because they are avoiding the corrupt events in this world. They don't want to hear it, see it, and acknowledge its presence. Once I watched the documentary, I was floored. I did everything that one person can do: emailed SeaWorld directly, tagged them in a Twitter post, and joined social media sites that empower liberating the orcas. (My twitter post went viral, just saying. It said something like: Empty your tanks, you bloody bastards!!!).

My point is that you have the power to change, in the little that you are given. You still have a voice, regardless of impact. It shapes my personality. It makes me feel good that I took initiative and I am a part of this process. I've talked to the director and I'm just as floored as she is. She has a fantastic mindset.

In addition, the problem in life is that not enough people care. Terrible things happen everyday and some people choose to zip their lips and look the other way. I used to blame society, but who is society? Society

is you and I! I used to think of society with this image in my head of a crowd marching in the same direction, same focus, and same goals. However, this isn't accurate. Everyone is swimming amidst his or her boundaries. But do you realize you built each wall of those boundaries? Do you realize you hurdled yourself in and snagged a seat in that far corner; do you realize you voluntarily disappeared within the borders you established? You're keeping quiet because maybe you were taught that. Maybe you were taught to sit on your hands and wait for someone else to make the first move. Maybe you were taught that you couldn't reach this, you couldn't reach that.

And, what a terrible way to live your life and what a excruciating thought process. You might as well live in a box with a sippy cup if you're not going to attempt to do something remarkable with your life.

I sit with an empty stomach, a growling mind, and a heart pounding to see significant change. I'm going to attempt to change the world, with little or vast impact. I have this mindset of change. I have this undying hope that we will better the lives of our people and our creatures on this planet, in the time frame that we are given. I have hope and I will do my best to stand with a torch and burn over everything inhumane.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" (Gandhi).

Life Tips #2: Eating Out

Dino Green

If you're like me, you can't stand eating out - the crowds, the wait for the food, the snooty waiters - but if you follow these tips you'll be sure to have an absolutely enjoyable experience!

1. Always go with a group. It's much more fun to eat out with some good friends. If you don't have any friends, there are plenty of hobos with great stories and no dinner plans!

2. Introduce yourself to the waiter. It's only fair that they know your name as well - and if you have a boring name like Al or Frank, make up a new one like Johnny Boy or Ralph-a-mundo.

3. Always ask for the waiter's opinion on what to order. It makes them feel important. Then laugh at their advice and order something different. This cuts them down and reminds them of your superiority.

4. Don't let price or allergies stop you from trying new things. If you don't like something, there's nothing an old pluck of the hair can't fix to get you a brand new meal!

5. Did your mother ever tell you not to play with your food? Does she also think Miley Cyrus is a Capri Sun flavor? Exactly. Here's a fun thing to do: Tie a napkin around your head and pretend you're blind. See how much food makes it into your mouth.

6. It's always nice to take a break from eating and enjoy the scenery. Walk around and see what others are eating. If they aren't looking, go ahead and taste their meals. This helps make sure that you've ordered correctly.

7. If you finish your meal before the person at the table next to you, you legally own their children. So don't sit next to someone who has children.

8. If dessert is offered, politely refuse. Then, when your bill comes, remark, "Where the hell is my cheesecake?"

9. When paying for your meal, remember to calculate the tip accurately. Ask yourself, "Was the waiter nice?" "Did he tell you the specials?" "Did he remember your birthday?" If you said no to any of these, one to two crumpled dollar bills is an acceptable tip. If you feel your waiter went above and beyond, it's okay not to tip him, there's no need to inflate his ego any more.

10. Read your bill carefully. If you don't understand a charge, demand to speak to a manager. This creates a distraction and allows you to make a quick exit, stuffing your pockets with dinner rolls as you leave.

Fall Beauty

Jessica Hernandez

Knick-Knacks

Autumn Frykholm

Are you on your porch
waiting for her to show up?
The sun is setting.

In her car, driving,
She wonders also if she
should be somewhere else.

Does your stance suggest
coolness? As if you do this
always in spare time?

Dust particles dance
in your vision while you wait
for what won't happen.

She passes the street
and forgets the cold feeling
that she is not right.

There is an order
and placement for everyone.
You are out of place.

Someone adjusts you
Like one adjusts their knick-knacks
on the dusty shelf.

Shiver in the cold.
Remember dinner's ready.
No one is coming.

Earthrise

P.J. McCain

There's been an accident; I am curled tightly into a ball with my lips lightly kissing my knees. There's a faint but persistent red flash from behind me. I don't turn, but I know. I know that I'm low on oxygen; that I am already dead. I ignore the light and stare out of the small window. My heart is thumping evenly and diligently, pumping my blood, which feels thick like coffee. I catch a glimpse of everything there is to see:

Earth—what a beautiful face to see in this place. I stare into my mother's face while we both spin lazily around the sun. Photons peek out from behind the edges of the atmosphere; gold appears like a crown on the planet. At once the light is air, ethereal. The sun's delicate fingers plucking rays from its harp and singing the notes across the horizon like dust motes on a still summer morning. Light ducks through the atmosphere and kisses the Ganges. The water shimmers as it bends and reaches across the land.

The red light is persistent still, and I'm notified: Oxygen at five percent.

I take in a breath. It feels sharp and unnatural to me now. I exhale and there is a flicker of pale blue light to the west. Mother Nature's mighty arm strikes her storm-forged steel true; thunder rolls across the flats of the Midwest and I can almost smell the thickness of the wetness in the air. Even now the reeds and the grasses sway to and fro, dancing and celebrating the madness of it all. The gulches are washed out, quenched. Water, indeed some of the same from the still and complacent Ganges, roars and tears through towns of man. The plains dry and the sun kisses the dirt and flowers burst upwards and outwards radiantly as if engulfed in balls of fire painted across the spectrum.

Two percent rings out and things are okay.

My eyes are darting about everything I can see. The mountains stand proud in the east; their mighty earthen heads have craned skywards ad infinitum, their eyes peering through the vastness for the faint glow from their distant cousins. The moon is playing with people in the channels on Venice who sit in wonder at the whispers of night's innocent musings. Blue and green swirl to the north; across the cold white expanses, their lights are the smoke that drifts throughout rooms filled with men and women who have spent their evenings wondering and dreaming. The sun sets on the Ganges.

Zero percent and I smile, my lips straight except for the corners, which gently curl upwards.

Everything seems still and beautifully mad in the now rapid red flashing. There's this urgency about the place that refuses to invite me.

I turn the hatch on the escape door, and am vomited from my tiny egg outwards—ever outwards—towards the dark, away from Earth. I twist my neck to see it one more time and what a beautiful face. Mother Earth smiles at me one last time; I'm smiling back. I turn towards the empty ahead of me. There is no elegy of emptiness, no lamentation for the dead—just silence. The stars are winking at me and though I feel a small pang I don't turn back towards Earth. I stretch my arms out as I float back to the beginning, back to the womb of all that ever was.

I return to the ether and laugh—and can't believe how strange it was to be anything more.

Rorschach Two

Faith Damm

Like Shore and Tide

Brendon Kolodziej

Oh, how strange times have come, we crash and collide,
Like day and night, like shore and tide.
A beloved father land divorcing your mother tongue,
Another grandiose, elaborate plan,
In the corner of the room a wool coat hung.
Passed down from him to her to you to me,
Passed down like shells in the sea.
Admiring the thriving housing markets of the hermit crab,
Stranded on the sandbar, calling you a cab.
Alert the cowering grounds keepers,
Fearing the everyday Grim Reapers,
Awakening the heavy sleepers and bring solace to the grieving weepers.
Oh, how strange times have come, we crash and collide,
Like day and night, like shore and tide.
I do things without even thinking about it.
The events of my day are all involuntary.
Through the thin plaster wall I can hear the elders talk.
"When did your son first begin to walk?"
"MTV is fucking evil!"
"Why do kids still play with chalk?"
Watching us all with the eyes of a hawk,
I feel your retinas on my flesh.
You whisk my life into a mesh.
You split my ends, I soon divide,
Until I take up all your room, until there's nowhere left to hide.
Oh, how strange times have come, we crash and collide,
Like day and night, like shore and tide.

Star Walker

Adam Mack

Joshua was high. Not just figuratively, but literally. In his mind he was floating high over the Rocky Mountains and slipping effortlessly away from the cool breezes of the mountain peaks and into the warm abyss of space.

As he passed, he waved to Ursa Major, who was teaching her cub to fish in the Pacific. Then he was on from there, past the moon and stopped by Orion's home to try on his belt. It fit Joshua so well that warrior of the stars let him keep it, and he wore it on his way to visit the lonely Jupiter. When he reached Jupiter he opened his mouth to say hello, only to find that he no longer had a body at all. No face and no mouth. No arms nor hands. He was just a star now. A star wearing a belt made of pure light. -But, how could Joshua wave to Jupiter if he didn't have hands? Without a way to communicate he decided to leave Jupiter alone so that the planet wouldn't think that he was rude, and drifted out further to the edges of the solar system. He decided he should go and comfort Pluto.

Pluto was drifting alone through its own slanted curve in the deep icy cold. Pluto was so far from the sun that he barely got any sun at all. Joshua drifted over and hugged the planet's surface like someone would hug a teddy bear, squeezing it tightly and sharing his warm and bright body with Pluto as he watched the creatures of the planet dance and rejoice in the light. He sat and watched them play for hours as they ran to and fro, chasing one another. They avoided the shade at all costs when they played, and eventually just lay themselves upon the surface to enjoy the light.

Soon they had all fallen asleep, warm and cozy on the surface and Joshua remembered his own bed and began to head home. He slipped away from Pluto and journeyed back to earth, floating down to his home, and then into his room, settling himself on his bed and falling to sleep, dreaming of the wonderful times he'd had that day.

As he woke up he opened his eyes, stood on his feet, stretched his arms, and held his hands out to examine them. He found that his hands were lying to him as he looked over them. His body was just a thinly veiled illusion over his real form, and now he could see the starlight coming through from underneath. He put his head into his hands and felt the light within him move about. He felt in his body like a stranger in someone else's home.

He didn't really have a hand, or a face, or a body at all. This was just the illusion that he used to explore Earth, but now he knew what he really was. He was a star, and friend to the constellations and planets of the Milky-Way. He was a traveler, only stopping in his body on Earth to explore and rest.

And in the evening he would return to his friends in the stars, and remember himself as he truly was.

Wordeater #130 & Spring '14 E-Zine Awards

Poetry

The John Stobart Award for Poetry was established in honor of the founder and guiding light of Wordeater. He retired from JJC's English/World Languages Department in 1999 having sponsored 106 issues.

Autumn Frykholm	Knick-Knacks
Stephen Clark Okawa	cement head
Jessica Rose	Only Time Can Endure
Renée Stone	Halluncinablism

Prose

Liz Chatman	A Glass Too Full
Edwin Alanis Garcia	Hypotenuse
Brendon Kolodziej	Upon Reaching the Turnpike
Sam T. Jensen	For the Good Times
P.J. McCain	Earthrise

Visual Arts

Lucy Dankova	cherry blossom
Faith Damm	Rorschach Two
Kris Kemp	Fractured
Heather Smith	H.H. Holmes 1&2
Leonardo Mireles	My Other Half

Juror

Adam J. Heidenreich
Wordeater Faculty Advisor

Award recipients receive monetary awards and recognition at Wordeater publication release events.

www.wordeater.org

See & hear the multimedia Spring '14 E-Zine

Submission Guidelines

Wordeater is always accepting submissions for its next print and e-zine issues. Wordeater is published in May and December.

Wordeater accepts poetry, prose fiction, creative nonfiction, essays, reviews, art, photography, comics, music, spoken word recordings, short films, and other multi-media for publication consideration.

All written work must be word-processed in Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) and submitted through wordeater@jjc.edu.

All multimedia must be submitted in appropriate formats either through wordeater@jjc.edu or CD/DVD to Adam Heidenreich (C-1063).

All work must be original and unpublished. Artists retain all rights to their own work and may publish it in other media.

Submissions may include a brief "About the Artist" biography (50 words or less), a digital photo, and a link to a web page for promotional purposes. This content will be included if the work is chosen for the e-zine.

Pleaseuse the online submission form and accurately provide all contact info. Please identify yourself as a current student, alumni, or a present or former faculty or staff member. Works will be judged anonymously by the student Editorial Board. There is no limit on the number of submissions, but it is suggested artists submit only a representative collection of no more than six entries for a single submission period.

Except for original artwork, submissions will not be returned.

Editorial changes may be made for readability and presentation.

All work must be submitted through wordeater@jjc.edu or sent to Adam J. Heidenreich, Associate Professor of English, Wordeater Advisor (C-1063), in appropriate digital format (CD or DVD) or with instructions for scanning or digital photography.

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